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**Easy Guidelines to Supporting Licensure
AMTA-Montana Chapter; By Linda Lemire**

Starting on January 5th and ending late April, the Montana Legislators will be "in session" at our Capital in Helena. Passing a bill requires at least 23 detailed steps. To help our Massage Therapy Licensure Bill make it through those many steps, we will need the legislators to know that there are a great many therapists and clients who support the bill. The only way that legislators can know of the support is for our massage therapy community to be vocal via letters and phone calls.

Writing a letter to your state legislators (senators and representatives of the house) or placing a call to them requires only a little bit of time and planning. Within this article you will learn to craft a short, articulate and personalized letter to your state lawmakers. The more personalized and less "form letter" looking, the more your legislator will take notice. Please refer to the sample letter and FAQs provided below.

(Sample letters)

Date

The Honorable Senator xxxx, (or)
The Honorable Representative xxxxx,

I would like you to support the Massage Therapy Licensure Bill for the following reasons:

(You can pick one or two sample reasons, such as those provided below.)

- *(Defines the scope of practice)* A massage therapy law would define our scope of practice, therefore letting the consumer, therapist and other licensed professionals know what is safe and legal for therapists to practice.
- *(Educational requirements)* Licensure would require specific educational and ethical standards that I feel are important when working with the public in a health care profession.

- *(Protection for the consumer)* Having a regulatory board would provide a means for reporting unprofessional behavior within the massage therapy profession.
- *(Professionalism)* Licensure raises the standards of the profession to the public and with other professions.

(Then add a short personal comment or two:)

Sample for therapist:

- I have been a professional Massage Therapist for x years. It is a major source of income for my family. 39 other states require state regulation and I would like massage therapy in Montana to be defined and respected as a profession, as in these other states.

Sample for client:

I have been a consumer of massage therapy for over x years. I appreciate that therapists will have a standard of education and that the profession will be respected by insurance companies and other health care providers.

OR

Massage Therapy has helped me to heal from injuries sustained in a car accident. Auto insurance covered the expense for massage therapy. I think that this is a valid reason for licensure of the profession.

Sincerely,

Your name

Mailing address and phone number.

Letter Writing FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions:

Can I call instead of send a letter?

Yes. The hotline to call is: **406-444-4800**.

Most likely you will be leaving a voice message. Be prepared with a brief written message that you can recite, such as: My name is xyz and I am a

massage therapist in Billings. I am requesting your support for the licensure bill. My phone number is: 406-xxx-xxxx.

Is sending a letter via email ok?

Yes, most of the legislators use email to communicate. There may be a few legislators who are not computer savvy and in those cases, calling or sending a letter via postal mail is appropriate. The state legislative website is: www.leg.mt.gov.

I don't have a computer. Can I handwrite a letter?

A handwritten letter is absolutely fine as long as the intentions of the letter are clearly stated. The mailing addresses are:

Senator XXXXX

State Capitol

PO Box 200500

Helena, MT 59620

and

Representative XXXX

State Capitol

PO Box 200400

Helena, MT 59620

How do I know to whom to send my letter?

The AMTA-MT Chapter is setting up a link on our website (www.amtamt.org) to make it easy for you to locate your legislators, their addresses and phone numbers. You can also call your county clerk to determine who represents your district.

When is the best time to send the letter?

The AMTA-MT Chapter will be sending out postcards and email reminders close to the dates when support letters/messages are most important. In the meantime, create your letter and save it so that it can be easily updated and sent within the requested timeframe.

How will others (such as clients) know when to send their letters of support?

It will be your responsibility to call or email your group of clients who have voiced their interest in writing/calling their legislators. As stated above, you will receive a postcard or email alerting you to the timeline.